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A D D R E S S

TO

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED IN INFANCY,

AND WHO HAVE NOT YET JOINED THEMSELVES

TO THE CHURCH,

BY PARTAKING OF

THE SACRAMENTAL SUPPER.

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BY THE REV. JAMES GEORGE,  
SCARBOROUGH.

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PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRESBYTERY OF TORONTO.

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“IN THE CITY OF TORONTO, and within ST. ANDREW’S CHURCH there ; the sixth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and forty years ; the which day, the Presbytery of Toronto being met and constituted”—*Inter alia*—

“The Presbytery had some conference concerning the course to be pursued in reference to baptized youth—previous to which, MR. GEORGE, on the call of THE MODERATOR, engaged in prayer, for Divine light and direction.

“The Presbytery enjoin Ministers to deal more pointedly and faithfully with parents, to show them their responsibility—recommend sessions to meet specially for prayer on behalf of the youth of their flocks—and also, appoint Mr. George to prepare a draft of an address to baptized youth, by next meeting of Presbytery.”

“IN THE CITY OF TORONTO, and within ST. ANDREW’S CHURCH there ; the fourth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and forty years ; the which day, the Presbytery of Toronto being met and constituted”—*Inter alia*—

“MR. GEORGE produced a draft of an address to baptized youth, as formerly appointed by the Presbytery, and the same having been read and duly considered, the Presbytery agreed to adopt the same, and directed it to be printed, and circulated in the several congregations.”

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery of Toronto, by

ANDREW BELL,  
*Pesb'y. Clerk.*

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## A D D R E S S .

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AFTER careful inquiry, it has been ascertained, that there are many within the bounds of this Presbytery, and in nominal connexion with us, who, although baptized into the fellowship of the Church in infancy, have now reached the years of discretion, yet manifest no indication of fulfilling their baptismal relationship. This is to us, matter of painful consideration ; and to those who are in this condition, we wish at present specially to address ourselves.\*

In early life you were, dear friends, by your parents dedicated to the Lord. If you admit—which we hope you do—the validity of infant baptism, then you must know, that by this rite you were placed within the pale of the visible church, and thus entitled to many benefits, not the least valuable of which are, the prayers and watchful care of the Ministers of Christ. Something more, however, must be done, than merely to have a name in the church, before you can be regarded as entitled to all the privileges of the household of God, or before we can look upon you as christians, in the full sense of that important term. For although infant baptism, or infant dedication, is a doctrine clearly taught in the word of God, and is full of comfort to believing parents, as it secures for their offspring many advantages—it is nevertheless plain, that *its full and efficient benefits to children*, can only be expected, when it is followed up in due time, by a firm faith in the doctrines which it unfolds, and by a public and sincere attachment to Christ,

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\* Although this tract is mainly intended for a particular class of persons, yet, with the divine blessing, it may be read with advantage by all into whose hands it may come; and the careful perusal of it is earnestly recommended to those who have not made a profession of religion, whether they have been baptised in infancy or not. The truths it contains we believe are peculiarly suitable to the case of such.

which it so distinctly pre-supposes. He that has been baptized in infancy, but who, on attaining the years of maturity, neglects to fulfil his baptismal relationship, and becomes a mere man of the world, is not the better, but the worse, for privileges which he treats with indifference, or means which he has never improved. "A price has been put into his hand to get wisdom," but he has "buried his talent in the earth."

That the privilege to which we have referred, as well as other means of grace springing out of it, or closely connected with it, may prove truly beneficial, you must, dear friends, make a right use of these. *But this cannot be done by you, till you close with the offers of mercy, embrace the Lord Jesus, and put on the badge of discipleship, by a public and sincere profession of your faith in him as your Redeemer.* It is true, that in infancy you were dedicated to the Lord; but the character you now bear, and the position you at present occupy, cannot but produce in us painful apprehensions, that you have virtually renounced your baptism, and cast in your lot with the men of the world. We are willing to make great allowance, for the unfavourable circumstances in which numbers of you have been placed. We are aware that many of you have grown up to manhood in parts of the country that were long destitute of the ordinances of the gospel. Hence, not a few have had but little opportunity to attend on the public means of grace,—while the greater part of those with whom you spent your early days, were persons grossly ignorant of all religion. And alas, it may be that these disadvantages were not all: some of your parents may have been faithless to their solemn obligations. If there was no sanctuary at which you could attend, it may be there was also no family altar at which you were required to bow your knees; and if you saw nothing of the Sabbath abroad, it is possible you

saw as little of it at home. Under the parental roof there might be no pious example, and little christian instruction. It is fearful to think of parents dedicating their children to the Lord in baptism, and yet permitting them to grow up ignorant of God, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. What must be that parent's account, at the tribunal of the Judge, who is thus faithless to his God, and cruel to his offspring? When parents neglect the spiritual interests of their children,—especially where there is little outdoor instruction, and where evil example is rife—that they should grow up without the fear of God, and become men and women of the world, is a result as little to be wondered at, as it is deeply to be deplored.

But, whatever may have contributed to bring you into your present sad state of indifference to divine things, *this* cannot be witnessed by us, without deep sorrow and great fear, lest you should be hardened in your sins, and perish under the just wrath of the Almighty. It will not do to say that our fear is groundless. Many of you are now heads of families; and is it not true, that in your houses the pious christian will look in vain for the least trace of religion? Not a few of you, have entirely, or almost, *turned your backs on the house of God*—while with men of the world, you are seen to form the most intimate friendships; and with them, and not unfrequently in their houses, you spend your sabbaths. With such men, you associate in all their pursuits and peculiar amusements,—engaging in these with a visible delight, which shews but too plainly, how deeply you sympathize in the views and feelings of those “who have no fear of God before their eyes.” Answer to your own conscience, if these things be not so;—and can we look upon all this, and not be alarmed and grieved? We tell you that we are filled with sorrow and fear, on your account; and you must hear us, for we speak to you

under an awful sense of what we owe to our Divine Master, and of what we owe to your immortal souls.

But, before proceeding farther, we must be permitted to say a few words for ourselves. We know well, that nothing tends more to sink the character of Ministers, and neutralize their efforts to do good, than the supposition, that their zeal for the conversion of sinners, is a mere cloak to conceal some selfish end. When this is founded in fact, it is hardly possible to conceive of a more loathsome and more criminal species of hypocrisy. He that knew the hearts of all men, charged the Pharisees with this, as one of the sins which rendered them peculiarly guilty. Nor is there any doubt, but the same thing will be seen, wherever *hypocrisy* attempts to build up a party by the arts of proselytism. Without making any laboured defence for the purity of our motives, we may nevertheless be permitted to say, that the Ministers of our Church have little to dread from the charge of proselytism. We know well, that the mere fear of *being suspected* of a proselytizing spirit, has, in not a few instances, produced a very questionable reserve and delicacy, where wholesome appeals and pointed reproofs might have done good. Now while we loathe the arts of proselytism, we offer no apology for that sensitiveness which shrinks from duty because the wicked or the thoughtless may misconstrue the motives from which we act. By God “actions are weighed”; and the day of judgment will make manifest what the motives were, from which men acted, when they professed to serve the Lord. He that believes these things, and sees sinners perishing around him, ought faithfully to warn, reprove, and instruct, let the judgment of men be what it may. Yet it is plain that if you shall deem our anxiety about you to spring from the mere wish that the number of our church members may be increased, or from any other worldly consideration, we shall

address you in vain. For your own good, dismiss such a notion from your minds. Believe us when we say that, as rulers of the Church of God, nothing could fill us with more alarm than to see our communicant roll swelled by the names of those who have “the form of religion without its power.” Such men are not better, but worse, for the profession they make; and we know, from bitter experience, that hypocrites and formalists enfeeble congregations—bring reproach on religion, and are the cause of much heaviness of heart to faithful ministers of Christ.

Let it then be distinctly understood that our object is not to induce you, while strangers to the power of godliness, to make a profession of religion. But our object is, in the name of our Divine master and in a reliance on the aids of his Spirit, with all earnestness, to exhort and beseech you to attend to the interests of your immortal souls; to close with Christ as your Saviour, and then publicly to profess his name. This is what we have in view. Well, let us implore you to listen with candour and individually to apply what we anxiously wish to bring home to your understanding and conscience.

But possibly, dear friends, you are surprised at our mode of address, and ready to exclaim—why all this anxiety about us? We have not renounced our baptismal relationship; we do not treat lightly what our parents did for us in infancy; we believe the Bible, and hope to be saved. Admit that these are the sentiments of your hearts; still you cannot suppose such professions will satisfy those who look at your character, and see the dangers to which you stand exposed. At present you are identified with the world that lieth in wickedness; and what are fair professions and good resolutions while you live in sin, and manifest not the least interest in spiritual things? “By their

fruits," said the Saviour, " ye shall know them." But what fruits are you bringing forth, that can warrant us to draw any favourable inference regarding your future prospects ? Although we do not take upon us to say that none of those who have been baptised in infancy, and, having reached manhood, fail to make a profession of their faith, can be Christians ; still we cannot but entertain great fears that such as live *out of the visible church*, when they may be connected with it, are really living " without God, and without hope in the world." If you are Christians, why act like men of the world and remain identified with them ? Those who love Christ, and believe in him for salvation, will love his people, and will neither be ashamed nor afraid to confess his name. But you neither seem to love the people of God, nor do you make any public profession of attachment to Christ. Is it uncharitable then to suppose that you are not Christians, but are really living in sin and are exposed to all its dreadful consequences.

To be a Christian, in the Bible sense of the phrase, is to be " a child of God," an " heir of glory," and " a joint-heir with Christ" of the inheritance which he has purchased for his people. Now many will readily admit that to this character they have no claim, who do not seem to perceive that the admission involves something very fearful. In the sight of God there are but two classes of men : those who are his friends, and those who are still his enemies. Such as have believed in Jesus are the friends of God, for Christ is our peace-maker. If you are united to Him by a living faith, then are you the children of God. But if not, God is your enemy ; for " ye are yet in your sins," and were you to die in this state you must perish eternally. God is merciful : yes, this glorious truth is announced in every page of the Bible, and is dwelt upon by the inspired writers with an elevation of feeling, which shews that the contemplation

of the divine mercy filled their bosoms with joy unspeakable. But, mark it, the *mercy of God* in which they rejoice, and which they delight to celebrate, is *the mercy of God in a Mediator*. If you are trusting to the mercy of God apart from the atonement made by Christ, you are trusting to you know not what. The Bible utters not a word of hope to the guilty but through the Mediator. “ Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

We have said there are but two classes of men, those who are the friends of God and such as are his enemies. Now we beseech you to try to settle this question. To which class do you belong ? If you belong to the world you are yet in your sins, and, as sinners, are the enemies of God and exposed to his wrath. Possibly you are hurt at such a statement as this, and tell us that you are not enemies to God, nor do you wish to be classed with the world ; but you are not yet sufficiently good to come to the Saviour. Hence you must for some time, at least, remain as you now are. This notion, which we believe to be common, is not the less dangerous that it looks plausible. Do you mean that you are not to embrace Christ as your Saviour till you can come to him with a holy heart ? While you hold this opinion you will never believe in him, or come to him. That holiness which is acceptable in the sight of God, and what else can avail you, never can be possessed till the soul has been united to the Saviour. To Him we are indebted for sanctification as well as justification. We can no more change our own hearts than we can atone for our sins. If the righteousness of Christ be *that* which justifies us, it is his Spirit that sanctifies us ; and the Spirit, in all his sanctifying operations, is the gift of Christ. It is through him as Mediator that divine truth is communicated ; and it is through Him, in the same character, that the

Spirit comes and applies the truth to our minds. The Holy Spirit "takes of the things that are Christ's and shews them unto us;" and when the hard and stony heart is taken away these are the things which, under this divine agency, enlighten the understanding, purify the conscience, and fit men for the service and enjoyment of God. Few errors can be more dangerous than the notion that we are not warranted to come to the Saviour till we possess a holiness that shall recommend us to the favour of God. This is really to trust to our own righteousness, which is as filthy rags. An interest in Jesus Christ is the sole ground on which sinners can trust for acceptance with God. And let it sink down into your minds, that till you believe in the Saviour you can no more possess true holiness than you can possess justifying righteousness. He is the true vine: the branches can bear no fruit except they be united to Him. Indeed, one great end for which Christ came into the world was to furnish sinners with a new heart, or, in other words, with true holiness. The scheme of redemption is in the fullest sense a restorative scheme. Listen to his own declarations. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." O, how precious and suitable is all this to such guilty, depraved, and helpless creatures as we are. In the same terms, all the invitations and promises of the gospel are announced. Men are viewed as guilty—but the gospel offers them pardon. They are found to be helpless and depraved—but the gospel furnishes them with strength, regeneration, and all the sanctifying graces. Hence the invitation is—come, and come just as you are. Do you feel that "you are poor, blind, and naked," to you, *as such*, the Saviour presents himself, with righteousness, and grace suitable to your wants. He counsels you to come to him, not if ye are rich, but to be made

rich ; not if ye are clothed, but to be clothed. His language is, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No matter how great your guilt may be, "his blood cleanses from all sin ;" and no matter how great your depravity is, his Spirit can take it all away and make you new creatures.

You profess to feel your unworthiness, hence you say we cannot come to Christ as we now are. But we tell you, you do not feel your unworthiness as you ought, you do not see your dreadful depravity and helplessness ; else you would never attempt to work out a righteousness that shall recommend you to the divine favour. Oh, if you saw your utter helplessness aright, you would just cry out as he of old, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and cast yourselves upon the divine compassion, as displayed in the Mediator. Yet we believe there are some who, from mistaken views, partly of their own inability and partly of the freeness and fullness of the gospel, endeavour to obtain a righteousness which may at least in some measure recommend them to God. These persons "labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought," yet they labour sincerely. It is at the same time plain that the greater part who profess a wish to have some righteousness before they come to Christ are not sincere, or at least are not at all influenced by the notion they profess to hold. Their plausible profession is, we fear, a mere apology for their indifference and aversion to the terms and call of the gospel. The truth is, such persons neither sincerely desire genuine holiness nor redemption through the blood of Christ.

Do not too hastily condemn this as a false and uncharitable statement. You say that you desire to be better, or, in other words, to have a righteousness that may recommend you to God, before you can come to the Saviour. Well, let us ask what efforts are you making to secure what you regard as an important qualification. Do you spend much time in secret

prayer? Do you read the scriptures daily, meditate much on divine things, converse as often as you can with pious persons, and attend regularly on the preaching of the word? You admit these to be very necessary duties. Nay, you will go farther, and admit that if these duties are neglected you never can have true holiness, nor can it ever be advanced in your souls. Yet, by the greater part of you, these duties are entirely neglected or but partially performed. You go to the house of God but seldom, scarcely ever read the Bible, shun all religious conversation with pious men; while your thoughts are solely taken up about the world, and it may be that some of you never bow your knees at a throne of grace. Let conscience speak. Is it not so? What then do you mean by saying that you desire to be more holy before coming to Christ. What! desire this, and yet never make use of the means by which holiness is cultivated. Deceive not yourselves; for we tell you plainly, in your present state you have not and cannot possess any true righteousness. Your own efforts never will produce this. Dear friends, take the Bible as your guide, and you will find there is but one way in the matter. Come, yes, come, poor and wretched as you are, and cast yourselves on the Saviour for "righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption." This is what the word of God warrants and enjoins. Why then not instantly close with the offers of mercy made to you through the Lord Jesus.

Some will admit the truth of this, and yet attempt to evade the force of the appeal by declaring that, dangerous as their condition is and helpless as they may be, still they think it better to remain as they are than make a profession of religion and act as many professing Christians do. There is assuredly much to be deplored in the conduct of godless professors. But because some men who call themselves Christians act wickedly, and if they repent not must perish, is that any reason why you should also go down to hell along with them. These

men to whom you refer are hypocrites and formalists, *not because they are Christians, but just because they are not Christians.* To say that the religion of Jesus Christ ever made any one a hypocrite, is a statement which no man should utter who has any regard for the credit of his understanding. But do you really think that none perish but such as perish with a false profession of religion on their lips? And will none stand on the left hand of the judge, but such as have abused the privileges of the church? Is sin committed under the cloak of a religious profession the only thing to be dreaded? Your sins may not be the same as the sins of such men. Admit that damning guilt lieth on their souls, is there none that cleaveth to you? Shall they be driven out from the presence of the Lord, and shall you be admitted into heaven with all your unpardoned sins upon you? Have you not read, that "hypocrites and unbelievers" perish together. The portion of the former is that of the latter. We have already hinted our sorrow at the conduct of godless professors of religion. You cannot think for a moment that we wish you to become like them. We tell them that a name to live is nothing; yea, that their conduct is a reproach to the cross of Christ. But we must tell you also, that if you turn away from him who died on the cross, you must perish. To draw comfort for ourselves from looking at the peculiar heinousness of the sins of our neighbours, is a common and we fear in many cases a fatal delusion. God only can estimate the amount of guilt which attaches to any accountable creature. The question with you ought not to be, how much greater is the guilt of formal professors than ours? But, are we sinners, are our sins yet unpardoned?

We wish earnestly to awaken you to a solemn consideration of your case as sinners. We wish to lead you to see your need of a Saviour. We wish you to see that Jesus Christ, as offered in the gospel, is just the Saviour that you need; and

we wish you to ponder deeply that "those who believe in him shall be saved, but those who believe not shall be damned." To an earnest and instant consideration of these truths we ask you to give your attention. Oh, it would be of little consequence what we might induce you to do, or what changes we might produce in you, or what steps soever you might take, unless we can, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, arouse you to think as penitent believers; yea, and with your whole heart, to embrace a crucified Redeemer. Stop short of this, and all your attainments will amount to nothing. Out of Christ there is no hope for the guilty. You acknowledge that you are guilty. Why then not embrace the blessed Saviour, and look to him as the Redeemer of your souls.

Do not try to put us off, and deceive yourselves, by saying that you intend to do all that we wish; but the present, *somewhat*, is not a convenient time for setting about it. And why not a convenient time? It is the day of salvation. To-morrow or next week will not be more convenient; and, alas, that future period on which you have fixed as the suitable time, may be to you not a day of salvation but the night of despair. Let us notice briefly some of the evils which may result from delay in this matter.

Your attachment to men of the world will be powerfully strengthened by continuing in your present state. We are by nature social creatures. The qualities in others which interest us awaken our sympathies, and produce that attachment which is called friendship. This, when founded on virtuous principles, is one main source of human happiness and a main cause of moral and intellectual improvement. But friendship without the fear of God is a source of unspeakable mischief. It is nevertheless plain, that while your feelings and sentiments are in accordance with the world, the men of the world will be your friends; and who can tell the evils to which you may be liable from making friends of those who are enemies to God.

It is not more fully illustrated by experience "that those who walk with wise men shall be wise," than that those who make companions of the thoughtless and wicked shall become in the most emphatic sense fools. If you are attached to such persons, you will soon learn to respect their opinions and imitate their vices. For a time, if you have been well brought up, you may regard their open contempt for sacred things with dislike; but if you hold close intercourse with them, this dislike will wear off, and in the end you may be seen taking your place beside them "in the chair of the scorner." If even the Christian, with his principles confirmed and his graces well matured, cannot hold close intercourse with the men of the world without feeling a deadening effect from their society, how perilous must such society be to the young, who are not established in the truth and whose minds are peculiarly susceptible of the worst impressions from the example of others. Many, of whom the fairest hopes were once entertained, have been ruined by wicked companions. Beware, lest the same thing may happen to you. To shew the dangerous effects of the influence under which you now live, and which is every day becoming stronger, let it be supposed that you feel some anxiety about your future well-being, and perceive, that in order to be safe, you must come out from the world and take your place with the people of God. Would you not feel it a difficult matter even now to break with your worldly associates, and to bear the contumely with which they would treat you, should you manifest sincere piety? Of this there cannot be a doubt. Long established friendships are not dissolved without pain, and he that can calmly bear the reproach of those whom he has long esteemed, must be supported by the highest and the purest motives. Yet be assured, if you ever become truly pious, your wicked companions must be forsaken, and their reproach must be endured. But is it not clear that, just the longer you stand connected as you now are with such

persons, the difficulties to which we have adverted will not be lessened but greatly increased. If you find it hard now to step boldly forth from the world, and declare "that whatever others may do, as for us, we are determined to serve the Lord." Think not that this can be more easily done at some future period. Every day that you continue in your present state, the influence of wicked companions will be more felt and their scorn more dreaded by you. Are you then resolved to live with them, and to take your portion with them in eternity? No. You tremble at the thought. You know that they are not the friends of God, and whatever you think of them you cannot think that they possess the qualities which fit them for the presence of God in heaven.

Carefully avoiding all reckless denunciations, we must nevertheless say, that whatever mere men of the world may possess of intelligence or the agreeable embellishments of life, they are neither safe nor useful companions to those who desire the friendship of God. But to sacrifice his friendship for the friendship of our fellow mortals is not only folly but madness. Under the most favourable circumstances worldly friendships have but comparatively little to bestow. But there are times, when help is most needed, that no succours can be obtained from this quarter. On the bed of sickness or of death, are the wicked companions with whom you now associate, and who may have led you into criminal indulgences, the persons you would wish to have around you? No. Nor are they the persons who, in the hour of deep distress, possess the will or the means to minister to your comfort. They will pay you a cold and formal visit and then forsake you; and, as they retire, you will in the bitterness of your heart be compelled to exclaim, "miserable comforters are these." The friendship of the world is death. Without God it can be nothing else; and yet possibly it is this which mainly keeps you back from embracing the gospel of Christ.

And is there no friendship to be found among the people of God? When a man abandons his worldly companions, must all his social affections perish? Those who have never studied the grand principles of the Christian religion, and never mingled with its pure-minded and warm-hearted believers, may readily say so. But he that knows what religion is, and has seen its effect on the human heart, knows well that among the followers of the Saviour friendship springs from far higher motives, and produces incomparably better fruits than the mere friendship of the world. Hence, when we ask you to abandon your wicked associates, rather than perish with them, if we can invite you to connect yourselves with those whose hearts are purified and warmed by the love of the Saviour, then we can assure you of such tender affection and benevolent service as you have never experienced in your intimacy with the world.

We have dwelt the longer on this topic from a conviction, that multitudes are kept from attending seriously to religion by the influence exercised over them by their godless neighbours and friends. Nor is it difficult to see, that in a country in which so many are living without any profession of Christianity, the children of even pious parents are exposed to great danger. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Indeed we tremble for the consequences, when we think that many of our dear young friends are engaged daily in the various duties of life, and mingle in social intercourse with the ignorant, the profane, and such as avow infidel opinions.

But if there are dangers to be apprehended from without, there is an enemy at work within the bosom not less to be dreaded. You admit that you are depraved creatures; but possibly you have not adverted to the fact, that while you continue in your present state this depravity is every hour acquiring additional strength, and if it is not checked by divine grace it will expand with the growth of all your powers. Hence

pride, vanity, avarice, malice, and licentiousness, with other evil passions, acquire in course of time a fearful dominion over the heart. Till we come to God by faith and repentance, every depraved passion, or those at least to which we are more especially liable, will continue to increase. The connection betwixt cause and effect is in nothing more certain than in this. While we continue strangers to God, neglect the means of grace, and live in the practice of sin, what else indeed can be expected but the complete enslavement of the soul by irregular appetites and criminal passions. This is the reign—the tyranny of sin by which the understanding is darkened, the conscience seared, and the heart made like to the nether mill-stone. And, oh! what are the means of grace to such a heart. There is a point, and God only knows but some of you may have reached it, where divine truth seems to lose all its force on the soul. God's judgments no longer alarm, and his mercies no more allure such a soul. "The strong man keeps the house," and every holy thing is excluded.

It is quite possible that you may feel and in some measure deplore the dominion of sin; but it may be you fancy that the evil passions and lusts which now torment you, hold you in bondage, and fill you with shame and remorse, will after a time quit the soul and leave you at full liberty to think of heavenly things and attend to religious duties. Vain supposition this. Divine truth brought home to the conscience by the Holy Spirit can alone free the soul from the dominion of sin. And be not deceived with partial and temporary changes. You may give up particular sins, or the sins peculiar to certain periods of life may be exchanged for others, yet in all this there is no true repentance. You may be weary, not of sin, but of its bitter fruits. The Israelites were weary of their idols, and ashamed of the fruits of their doings, yet they only turned from one idol to another—not to the Lord. Such changes give no ground to suppose that the heart is changed, for all the while

depravity in one form or other may be deepening and extending its influence over every power of the mind. Yes, and thus it will be, until as broken-hearted penitents you come to the physician of souls, who alone can deliver you from all your spiritual maladies. Why not instantly come to him. You know that your sins are making you wretched ; you believe that the suffering of sin in the present life is but a foretaste of the everlasting shame and misery that await the wicked. The means which you may employ to better your heart will all end in disappointment *while you remain away from him*, whose grace can alone make means efficacious. Living as you now are, sabbaths are not blessed to you—the Bible is not blessed to you. The benefits of the table of the Lord are not realized by you. The society of godly persons is not blessed to you. While the depravity of your own heart is every day increasing, and ever producing much real suffering, for which the pleasure of sin is but a poor compensation.

But possibly you think that, small as the portion of earthly happiness is which you now possess, should you make a sincere profession of religion, you must part even with that. Some good men, we confess, have spoken on this matter in terms which are apt to lead to the notion that a true Christian can derive no enjoyment from the things of the present life, nor ought he to seek it even in the lowest degree. It cannot be too distinctly understood, that all earthly pleasures which are sinful must be given up by the followers of Christ. But is this a sacrifice ? What is sacrificed ? Things which are unsatisfying—things degrading to a rational creature, and destructive, when possessed, of his true peace of mind and future prospects. It is a gross perversion of language to call such things by the name of pleasure. The pleasures of sin are but for a season. The soul requires enjoyments that shall be lasting. The pleasures of sin only gratify our senses, or minister to our malignant passions. He that has most of this soon finds that

he has obtained not a large portion of happiness, but much real misery. We fearlessly affirm that religion strips no man of any true enjoyment. Or if our divine master at times requires us to make real sacrifices, to forsake all for him, he will not under these trials leave us comfortless. Hence men “have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods.” They knew their Lord was near them, and he gave them peace and “joy which the world could not give nor take away;” and they knew they had an inheritance above, on which they were soon to enter. But putting times of persecution out of view, we ask—Did religion ever render men less happy as parents, as children, or neighbours? Does it unfit any man for tasting intellectual enjoyments, or for partaking of the innocent gratifications of life. When godliness comes into a house, and when the family altar is set up, and parents and children are seen going on hand in hand in the divine life, does all happiness flee away from that house? Believe it, dear friends, that “godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.” The fear of the Lord is not more truly the beginning of wisdom than of genuine happiness. The reason of this is plain enough: all things are to us just what God’s blessing makes them. Alas! without his blessing, we will find that the choicest of earthly good things will prove but like “grapes of Sodom and apples of Gomorrah!” If professors of religion are unhappy, it is sin, not religion that makes them so. He that leaves the world and turns to God must part with much—with his shame, weakness, and sin; but not with what contributes essentially to his happiness. If you are continuing in sin in order that you may taste happiness, you are labouring under the greatest possible delusion. You are “sowing the wind, and will reap the whirlwind.” Happy without the friendship of God! happy with Almighty God as your enemy! Preposterous folly. Let all know this, that “the wages of sin is death,” and that true happiness can only be found in the favour

of God. While you continue in sin "you are destroying your own mercies," and "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath."

There is another matter on which it is needful that we should warn you. Some of you are heads of families. You all admit the force of example. Now think of the example which you are setting before your children, while you continue to live as mere men of the world. We shall suppose you to give your dear little ones some religious instruction, and wish them, feebly wish them, to become Christians. But can you really expect this wish to be realized, or the instructions which they receive, either from yourselves or sabbath-school teachers, to take effect on their minds. If even apparent inconsistency weakens the force of our wisest counsels, glaring inconsistency must render abortive the best things we can utter in words. When parents manifest this, their children cannot but notice it; and it must tend either to lower the character of parents in their estimation (a thing very much to be dreaded), or render divine truth of no value in their eyes. Your example is constantly before them, and this they will naturally imitate. But whatever your words are, you cannot but perceive that your example is adverse to religion. Your children will assuredly think, that if religion were all-important their parents would make a profession of it, and take their place among the people of God in the visible church. But seeing you have not done this, the inference they will naturally draw is, that although you may occasionally in a few formal words recommend religion to their attention, yet, after all, it is really but of very little consequence. Hence, what is treated by you with indifference may by them be treated with fixed aversion and open contempt. It were not well at present to dwell on this; yet it cannot but produce painful emotions to think how large a portion of the avowed infidelity of the times may fairly be traced to those houses in which there was just as much of *the form of*

*religion* as rendered it contemptible in the eyes of the young and the thoughtless. Would you then, dear friends, have your children to grow up in the fear of God, oh, set His fear before them in the living testimony of a pious example. You are very anxious that your children should be happy. This is natural and laudable; but we have already shown that true happiness cannot be possessed without holiness. You may send them to those places where religious instruction may be obtained. This is also right. But when they return to their homes and find that father never bows his knees at a throne of grace, and mother has no pious instructions to communicate—see no sabbath under the parental roof—for nothing is heard it may be on that day, by your fireside, but frivolous and worldly conversation—what can you expect, but that they shall grow up utterly regardless of their God and their eternal interests. You may speak to your children with the wisdom and zeal of apostles; but while you act as mere men of the world you are really standing betwixt them and heaven, and your example is pointing them to the broad way that leads to destruction. No one who is not anxious about his own salvation will ever take a deep interest in the salvation of others. Yet, if the views we have stated are correct, ought you not as parents, looking at the deplorable influence of a godless example on your children, and looking at the relation in which you stand to them, to find in this motives to a life of piety? Alas! your indifference to divine things may be the means of ruining the souls of some that are very dear to you.

We have more than slight grounds for suspecting that some of those whom we wish to address scarcely employ a serious thought on religion. “The god of this world hath blinded their minds.” “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed,” are the questions that chiefly if not wholly engage their attention. Those who have reached this state of moral degradation are not likely to derive

much benefit from the arguments and appeals which may be brought before them. But the greater part of you we hope are not in this lamentable condition. Your understanding is not wholly darkened, and the voice of conscience is yet heard if not obeyed. You readily admit that your soul is of more value than the whole world. You also acknowledge your guilt and depravity, and profess to believe that without pardon and regeneration you cannot obtain either a title or a fitness for heaven. You also know that Christ is the only Saviour, and that without faith in him and repentance unto life you cannot be saved. O that these admissions, these glorious truths, were embraced by you as grounds and elements of a living faith. For in the gospel economy all things are ready, and you are invited, poor and guilty as you are, to come and partake of the rich provision. Why then delay in a matter of such vast importance.

Is the old apology again to be advanced : the present is not a suitable time for attending to the business of your salvation. Other things now engage your attention, and you cannot find leisure to enter upon the subject of religion. *But then you resolve that you shall do so at some future time.* This resolution is excellent ; yes, an excellent piece of deception to most of those who cling to it. It is indeed a mere excuse, by which you attempt to stifle conscience, and shut the mouths of those who urge on you the necessity of giving instant heed “to the things that belong to your peace, ere they be for ever hid from your eyes.” Verily, there is reason to fear that there are many this day in hell who went down to that place of torment with this resolution, with “this lie in their right hand.”

Many who resolve to attend to religion at some future time, have obviously no well-defined notion when the more convenient season shall be. There are others, however, who fix on the evening of life as the *suitable period*. They found the gay pursuits of youth incompatible with the solemn inquiry, “what

must we do to be saved ;” and now they find the engrossing cares of middle life as little favourable for taking up and seriously considering this momentous question. But then they are looking forward to old age as a season that will afford all the mental repose and freedom from engrossing cares which they think, and not without reason, to be needful on entering seriously on the work of salvation. So it comes to this ; that when you shall have nothing else to do, or rather when you can no longer serve the world, the devil, and the flesh, you shall then give some little attention to the service of God. According to this notion, the chief end of man is to live to himself as long as he possibly can, and as little as may be to his Creator. Can this really be the chief end of a rational and an immortal creature ? Man was made “to glorify God and to enjoy him.” But he who wishes to live without God as long as he can obtain gratification for his sensual appetites, is only less criminal than the man who denies the divine existence. Nor can we allow that such a man has any sincere wish either to serve God, or to enjoy him in a future life. It is not denied, that, when the worldling finds that he must soon leave this earth, he would rather go to heaven than to hell. But heaven is not desired by him for that which makes it truly a glorious heaven—the love and service of God. If you reply, that you at least desire to enter heaven from pure motives,—then, we ask, why are you not earnestly seeking after those graces which will fit you for its service and its joys ? Remember that as the title to eternal felicity is acquired in time, so the grace which fits us for that felicity must be acquired and cultivated in the church on earth.

What ! shall youth and manhood be spent in cultivating all the depraved passions, which fit the soul for hell and make men like devils ; while the dregs of life, a small portion of old age, shall only be set apart to prepare for heaven, and to glorify God in the world. Do you realize God as your Creator,

Preserver, and Redeemer? and yet feel no obligation to consecrate to Him the best of your days? The Jews were required to present the first fruits to God; and does he not still require from all the first fruits of those powers and talents which he has conferred upon them? Depend upon it there is no proper sense of duty to God, no love nor gratitude to our blessed Saviour, if we do not willingly consecrate to him the best of our days. But what shall be said of those who are resolved to spend youth and manhood in the service of hell; and yet draw consolation from the resolution, that they shall give to heaven a few months or years of decrepid old age. Than such resolution, nothing can more clearly evidence a total want of love to God. It proves distinctly a decided aversion to his service, and the most criminal attachment to the world. These men do in their hearts, let them profess what they may in words, wish to pluck forbidden fruit till the head is palsied; and then they hope, strange hope, that some minister of mercy will lay before them fruit from the tree of life, that they may eat and live for ever.

Far be it from us to limit the divine compassion, or the sovereign power of God. He may shew the richness of his grace by saving at the eleventh hour. But how many who have had the offers of mercy pressed upon them through life, yet have treated these offers with neglect, and have lived in rebellion against God, cherishing all the while the resolution, that at last they would snatch a fragment of time and in that make their peace with the Most High, have been enabled to carry this resolution into effect, can only be known to Him that knoweth all things. But to us the future prospects of such men seem fearfully dark. In reference to the most favourable cases, we can just say that we do not despair. While in regard to the greater part who have cherished this heaven-insulting delusion, we dare not entertain the least hope. God cannot be deceived and he will not be mocked,

and those who mock him in this way may be given up to judicial blindness—to believe a lie, and at last to wonder and perish.

But why look to old age as the best time for the act of faith, *the work of repentance*, and as the period most suitable for bringing forth fruits unto holiness. Many of you whom we address will never see old age. Does death only smite down the old? Are there not some of those with whom you started in life who are now mouldering in the dust? They have died young; and are you less liable to death than they were. Ah, dear friends, while you may be looking forward to threescore and ten, the decree may have gone forth, “Cut them down, why cumber they the ground;” and ere you have reached the meridian of life, you may be suddenly called to meet God as your judge! Work while it is day, “for the night cometh, in which no man can work.” But suppose you should reach old age, have you never seriously thought how unfit a season that generally is for beginning the great work to which all your time and powers ought to have been devoted. Some old men retain all their faculties to the last. Yet the greater part who reach an advanced period of life, have to deplore the decay of all the natural powers, and are frequently overwhelmed by a load of infirmities. “The keepers of the house tremble; those that look out at the windows are darkened; the daughters of music are brought low; desire fails; and the grasshopper is a burden.” Have you never seen this striking picture realized? And yet you propose, amidst these decays of nature and the peculiar infirmities of old age, for *the first time* seriously to attend to the interests of your soul. What folly is this! the great work is not to be commenced till possibly you are incapable of attending on public ordinances, unable to search the scriptures, and, it may be, utterly unfit to converse advantageously with pious Christians. With all the senses half shut up—the mind so weak as to be exhausted by the least effort—you nevertheless propose to investigate the grounds of faith and hope, to enter on a thorough self-examination, and in your life to furnish evidence of your regeneration, and to glorify God by your good works. Is this rational? Does the word of God in the slightest degree warrant this presumption? In a word, are you not, till that which has

been emphatically called second childhood shall come upon you, to put the great questions, what are you? Whither are you going when you leave this world? and how are you to enter the next? Suppose a godless aged man to turn his mind sincerely to divine things; think, we beseech you, of the disadvantages under which he labours. The Bible is to him a strange book. He has not its treasures laid up in the memory; he knows not where to find its consoling promises; and he sees not the connection of these with that atoning sacrifice that gives them all their efficacy. The very language of the Bible is strange to him, for he has not learned the language of Canaan in his youth. Besides nature is soon exhausted. He wearies in a few minutes, and closes the book with indifference. In prayer the same lamentable symptoms of spiritual stupidity and langour are apparent. If some pious Christian engages in this duty, the object for whom he pleads is seen gazing vacantly around or dozing half asleep. Sad spectacle this; who can behold it without horror, and the most fearful apprehensions lest the spirit of God may have been utterly and for ever grieved away. Oh! there is a calmness sometimes manifested by godless persons at the close of life, as much to be dreaded as if the language of despair were heard from their lips.

Not unlike the delusion which we have been attempting to expose, is that of trusting to a death-bed repentance. The hour of death is regarded by many as the most suitable time for embracing the offers of mercy, and obtaining a meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Few misconceptions are greater, and none ought to be more dreaded than this. Death may come suddenly, you may not have an hour to prepare to meet your God. While you are saying soul, eat, drink, and be merry, He that reigns over all may be saying "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." To-day you may be in health, vainly anticipating a long life; and to-morrow you may be in eternity. Think, dear friends, what a fearful thing it must be to have all your hopes blasted in a moment; and to be ushered, with all your sins upon you, into the presence of that God who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. Against sudden death you have no security.

But admit that you may have some time granted you on your death-bed for reflection, and what you call preparation, have you seriously considered how unfit the *closing scene* commonly is for sober inquiry. You have no doubt seen others die. You have not forgot their paroxysms of pain, the anxious eye looking in vain for help, and the heart-rending groans of distress. "At evening you heard them say, Would to God it were morning; and at morning, Would to God it were evening" For they were "filled with tossings to and fro," and could find no rest. While the sight of all they were about to leave, and the awful realities of the eternal world breaking in on the eye of the troubled spirit, filled them with strange alarms, at once perplexing reason and arousing conscience. O, did you then think that the hour of death was the most suitable time to begin the great business of religion? Did you think it the best time for the dying man to commence to learn literally the first principles of godliness, and to begin self-examination and other highly important duties? No, dear friends, you did not. But if you reflect aright on the matter, you saw that what the dying man needed was strong faith, joy in the Holy Ghost, and a clear sense of his Redeemer's presence. But what grounds has he to expect all this at last who has lived a life of sin, with the resolution that at death—yes, *then*, but not *till then*, he would begin to inquire after the Lord and do His will?

No one can tell what it is to die. But some who have been at the gates of death, and have been brought back as it were to the land of the living, have declared, "that to look at death at a distance and to behold it just at hand, is as different as it is to look at the picture of a lion and to meet that animal in his native desert." Death is truly the king of terrors to all who are not supported by a well grounded hope in the atoning blood of Christ. You may in the days of youth and health be so engrossed with the business and amusements of life that thoughts of death shall but seldom be permitted to occupy your attention, while false hopes and delusive conceptions of the mercy of God may yield a partial confidence to some in contemplating their latter end. But if men see things aright—see God as infinitely holy and just, and behold sin as that which is utterly irreconcilable with the divine perfections and moral government of God—they will see that nothing but a firm faith in the righteousness of Christ can take the sting out of death.

Without this death must be truly dreadful ; for as the tree falls so must it lie, and he that dies out of covenant with God, is lost for ever.

There is not one of you who would not readily own that an interest in the friendship of God would be unspeakably precious at death. Why not seek that now ? Is not an interest in God's friendship invaluable in life ? It is guilt, obviously, that makes death terrible ; and can that which renders you not only unhappy in life, but may make you miserable "when heart and flesh faint and fail," be too soon removed ? O ! is it not madness for you thus to live in sin, every hour exposed to eternal ruin, with nothing to support you but the dreadful possibility—that at the last hour you may repent and be pardoned.

But we must draw our little tract to a close ; yet we cannot do this without telling you, in the most explicit terms, that if you perish, you perish with the rich provision of the gospel presented before you, and urged on your acceptance. All things are ready. The garment of righteousness is ready, and the gospel feast is prepared, and God hath sent forth his servants to invite you to come in ; and, O, do not delay. Do not trust to a death-bed repentance. You may die suddenly, or your mind may be convulsed by frenzy or clouded with stupor; or you may be given up to sore judicial blindness, and left to die "as a fool dieth." Disregard the admonitions and warnings we have uttered, neglect the offers of mercy, and spend your days in the service of sin, all the while entertaining the hope that at the hour of death you may repent and be saved ; and when the hour of death comes, may not the Lord say—  
 "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you." If God magnifies his mercy in the pardon of penitent believers, let it not be forgotten that he will manifest his justice in the condemnation of the impenitent. Prepare for death ; prepare to meet your God in the days of health, when you have all the means of grace, and may employ these to most advantage. At the hour of death you may have much to regret ; but at that hour it will not be matter of regret, but of inexpressible joy, that for many years

you could read clearly your title to the heavenly inheritance — that for many years you have served God faithfully, done good to the souls of others, and with your last breath can testify to the preciousness of religion. But if from a death-bed you have to look back on an ill-spent life, what remorse must that produce ; and as you look forward fears may arise in your mind, which no words can utter, and which the kindness of all your earthly friends cannot allay. What then meaneth your indifference to divine things *now*, and why delay one day the great work of your salvation ? “ Why halt ye betwixt two opinions ? ” “ Choose ye this day whom ye will serve : ” “ for you cannot serve God and mammon.” Choose God then as your God in Christ, and it shall be well with you in life, at death, and through eternity.

As ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we implore you to ponder seriously the sentiments we have uttered. Lay not this little tract aside, dear friend ; before you ask the question, *Why am I not a Christian* ; and on your knees at a throne of grace implore the great God our Saviour to have mercy on you, and through the graces of his Spirit to give you a name and a place among his people. So that when he comes to judge the world, you may be one of those to whom he shall say “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

In fine we entreat you, as you value your immortal souls, to come to the Saviour. We beseech you, by the recollection of what your parents did for you, and which you would tremble to disavow ; yes, and by the tears and the prayers which some of these parents may have poured forth while they sought your salvation, we beseech you to come to the Saviour. By the joys of angels and of the spirits of the just made perfect, we entreat you to come, that there may be joy in heaven on your account. By the throne of judgment and all the vast realities of a future world, we beseech you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.



